

The University of Chicago

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THE PREREVOLUTION

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
JUNE, 1943

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In a scornful passage toward the end of the Précis du siècle de Louis XV, speaking of the intellectual decadence which was becoming apparent during the closing years of his hero's reign, Voltaire attacked the vogue of utopianism then current in France.

Who would believe [he wrote] that the Geometricians were sufficiently extravagant to imagine that one could, by exalting his soul, see the future like the present? More than one Philosophe wanted, after the example of Descartes, to put themselves in the place of God, and to create, as he did, a world with the word.

A similar extravagance infected morality. There were intellects blind enough to undermine the foundations of society, thinking to reform it. There were persons foolish enough to uphold that the terms mine and thine are crimes, and that one ought not to enjoy the fruits of his labor; that not only are all men equal, but that they have perverted the order of nature in assembling; that man is born to be isolated like a wild beast; that the beavers, the bees, and the ants disturb the eternal laws when they live in a Republic.

These impertinences, worthy of the insane asylum, were for some time in the vogue, like the dancing monkeys that are shown at fairs.¹

The two decades preceding the publication of the Précis were the golden age of French utopianism; it is small wonder that the patriarch of Ferney was sufficiently annoyed by the extravagances of the "blind intellects" to write such a diatribe against them. As a matter of fact, at the time of the writing of the Précis, the utopian vogue in French letters was at least a century old. Beginning with the last quarter of the seventeenth century, delineations of ideal commonwealths had been appearing on the French book market with increasing frequency; the period between 1676 and 1790 witnessed the publication of some two score utopian romances and treatises. The more noteworthy of these books were Foigny's Aventures de Jacques Sadeur (1676), Vairasse's Histoire des Sévarambes (1677), Gilbert's Calejava (1700), Lesconvel's Voyage du Prince de Montberaud (1709), Tyssot de Patot's Voyages et aventures de Jaques Massé (1710) and Voyage de Groenland (1720), Desfontaines' Nouveau Gulliver (1730), Béthune's Relation du monde

¹Voltaire, Précis du siècle de Louis XV (Genève, 1771), II, 246-48.

de Mercure (1750), Leszczynski's Royaume de Dumocla (1752), Morelly's Basiliade (1753) and Code de la nature (1755), Ville-neuve's Voyageur philosophe (1761), Beaurieu's Elève de la nature (1763), Roumier's Voyages de Milord Céton (1765), the anonymous République des philosophes (1768), Mercier's An 2440 (1770), Rétif de la Bretonne's Découverte australe (1781) and An 2000 (1790), and Grivel's Isle inconnue (1783). The popularity of the utopian vogue is attested by the recourse to the genre of such writers as Montesquieu, whose Histoire des Troglodites is a miniature utopia encased in the framework of the Lettres persanes (1721); Voltaire, who introduced a description of the fabulous Eldorado into his Candide (1759) to mock the obscure but vociferous utopists of his day; and Rousseau, whose Contrat social (1761) is the high water mark of utopianism in eighteenth-century French thought.

French utopianism is obviously but a component part of a general European preoccupation with ideal commonwealths during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.² As in England, Germany, or Italy, the main intellectual currents of European history are clearly discernible in the stream of French utopian thought from the end of the seventeenth to the close of the eighteenth century. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Cartesianism is the dominating philosophy, but a new empirical spirit begins to make its influence felt shortly after the turn of the century. Foigny, Vairasse, and Gilbert are Cartesians of the first water; the most characteristic features of their thought are skepticism and geometrical logic. However, from Tyssot de Patot on, there is a growing awareness of the shortcomings of the Cartesian system and an increasing fascination with the physical sciences. Between 1725 and 1750 Newtonianism gains decided ascendancy over Cartesianism; the emphasis of the utopists seems to shift from geometric perfection and logical language to the observation of physical phenomena and natural forces. After 1750 Cartesianism survives only in the crystallized details of the literary genre--such as architectonic plans for cities--but the dominating currents are empiricism, utilitarianism, and sensationalism. This is the period during which the victory of the new philosophical spirit over entrenched orthodoxy is finally achieved and the utopias written in the course of these years contain all the shibboleths of the vic-

²See P. B. Gove, The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction (New York, 1941).

tors--sociability, sensibility, beneficence, lay morality, sensationalism, and, above all, the return-to-nature motif. The doctrine of human perfectibility--the idea of natural and inevitable progress--appears also during the same period but reaches its full flowering only after 1770, in the utopias of Mercier and Rétif de la Bretonne. The passive skepticism of the Cartesian school yields its place on the eve of the Revolution to an active faith in the gradual amelioration of man and his surroundings. A robust optimism displaces the satirical pessimism of the early eighteenth-century utopists. In the utopian thought of prerevolutionary France the wheel comes full circle during the last century of the old regime. Faith, scorned and discarded by the Cartesians, regains its rightful place in the hearts of the Newtonians and Buffonists, and becomes the kernel of a new orthodoxy.

The most important component of the ideological content presented by the various utopias during the prerevolutionary period, is the idea of a perfect government. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century geometrical perfection is the criterion by which the utopists determine the superiority of a given government. The utopian lands described by Foigny, Vairasse, and Gilbert are inhabited by rational citizens who dwell in geometrically perfect cities, and who "reason upon everything that presents itself." During the first quarter of the eighteenth century the idea of a perfect government emerges from this philosophical void and becomes the vehicle of political and economic protest. This, of course, is the period of the War of the Spanish Succession, the famine year of 1709, and the increasing misery of the people of France. A good government, according to Lesconvel, Tyssot de Patot, and Montesquieu, who wrote utopias between 1700 and 1725, is one that does not embroil the state in useless dynastic wars and which maintains the prosperity of the subjects. All three of these utopists prefer the monarchical type of government, but they declare that a purge, usually of blood, is necessary to bring it to perfection. Desfontaines, Béthune, and Coyer, the utopists of the second quarter of the eighteenth century, are also adherents of the monarchical form of government--although Desfontaines exhibits republican inclinations--but there is a slight change in emphasis. Just as Rousseau was to object to monarchy as a form of government on the ground that it opens the way for frivolous fools and petty intriguers to high places, Coyer and Desfontaines register their

disapproval of that type of monarchy which wastes the substance of the state in frivolous pursuits and fails to safeguard the well-being of the common people.

At the turn of the century the republican ideal receives powerful support from Rousseau and the obscure Morelly. Rousseau, in his Contrat social (1761), condemns the monarchical form of government and declares the superiority of an elective aristocracy as a governmental agency. Morelly, in his Code de la nature (1755), envisages the kind of government which is headed by an elective executive and in which all political authority is vested in a graduated system of senates and councils. In contrast to this republicanism, however, the four remaining utopists who wrote between 1750 and 1755--Leszczynski, Villeneuve, Beaurieu, and Roumier--all subscribe to enlightened despotism as the ideal form of government. Thus, republican sentiment among the mid-century utopists is represented by a small and unrepresentative minority; the majority are firmly in favor of monarchy as the desirable type of government, but they insist that this regime should not embroil the nation in dynastic and futile wars and that it should prevent popular starvation. As for the four utopias which were written during the last two prerevolutionary decades--Mercier's An 2440 (1770), Grivel's Isle inconnue (1783-87), and Rétif de la Bretonne's Découverte australe (1781) and An 2000 (1790)--none of these advocates a republican form of government. All four are unanimous in declaring the superiority of a constitutional monarchy, and at least two of them expressly reject the republican idea.

The other components of the ideological content presented by the prerevolutionary utopias--the idea of a perfect social structure, that of a perfect economic system, that of a superior religion and a desirable type of education--remain stationary and uniform during the entire period under discussion. All the ideal communities envisaged by the utopists are in various degrees conceived in liberté, égalité, and fraternité, although liberté and fraternité are on the whole less emphatically championed than égalité. In the field of economics only two of the utopists of the entire period--Desfontaines and Grivel--fail to adopt some form of collectivism; the economic thought of the other utopists is dominated either by state socialism or by pure communism. This precocious socialism is undoubtedly the philosophical and literary heritage of Plato, More, and Campanella, tempered and reinvigorated

by contemporary historical processes--much as Marxian socialism is a refurbishing of an old economic doctrine to offer a solution for the problems created by the industrial revolution. In the religious sphere the deistic creed is adopted by the overwhelming majority of the utopists, only two of whom--the conservative Lesconvel and Grivel--are willing to retain Roman Catholicism in their imaginary commonwealths. One is inclined to venture the statement that the entire stream of French prerevolutionary utopian thought springs from a basic dissatisfaction with contemporary religious creed and practice. As for education, those of the utopists who express an opinion in this matter are unanimous in their preference for a state-controlled, lay educational system. The only change occurs toward the middle of the century, when the emphasis shifts from a "rational" to a "natural" education. The precepts of infant welfare remain the same throughout the entire period. Foigny, writing in 1676, nearly a century before the publication of Rousseau's Emile, mentions that the austral infant is suckled at the breast of its mother, is not wrapped in swaddling clothes, bound up with tight bands, nor placed in a cradle. Exactly the same recommendations are made by Grivel in 1787.

From the foregoing it would seem that prerevolutionary French utopian thought, as far as the ideological content is concerned, shows a very limited scope of evolution during the one-hundred-odd years of its history. Indeed, the idea of a perfect government is the only component of this ideology which is obviously volatile and subject to an evolutionary scheme. On the other hand, if we consider the spirit and basic philosophy of this utopianism, a definite pattern of evolution becomes at once apparent, and the utopians, the beneficiaries of the perfect society and state, fall into three distinctive and successive categories. During the early part of the utopian trend, down to the middle of the eighteenth century, utopias exist only for strange races inhabiting remote lands. At the turn of the century a sudden metamorphosis takes place; in the hands of Morelly and Rousseau utopia becomes a scheme of communal living not for fabulous creatures beyond the seas, but for men anywhere. Finally, after 1770 utopia reaches its destination; it turns into a social and political blueprint for French men and French women living either in France or in some insular domain. All the three utopists who wrote between 1770 and 1790--Mercier, Rétif de la Bretonne, and Grivel--describe utopias

inhabited by Frenchmen. Mercier and Rétif de la Bretonne (in his An 2000) draw the picture of a future France. Grivel and Rétif de la Bretonne (in his Découverte australe) fancy a France outremer, where the goal of perfection either has been attained or is near attainment. The most graphic illustration of this evolution is the gradual change in the application of the plans for geometrically designed cities. From 1676 to 1752, from Foigny to Leszczynski, these symmetrical cities have already been built and are inhabited by such startling nations as austral hermaphrodites, Sevarambians, Naudelians, Mercurians, Dumoclangs, and their ilk. From 1753 to 1770 the dwellers of these cities are on the whole Selenites, Abadians, and Ajaoans, but the plans that Morelly draws for his perfect city, in the Code de la nature, are designed for no folk of mist but for men anywhere. Then, after 1770, the mask drops and Paris itself becomes the geometrical city, even when it is impishly called Sirap, as in Rétif de la Bretonne's Découverte australe. The spirit of French prerevolutionary utopianism is thus characterized by a homeward movement which begins in the unknown austral continent at the end of the seventeenth century and ends on the banks of the Seine on the eve of the Revolution. This, of course, is essentially a demonstration of increasing boldness and conviction; Foigny and Vairasse at the close of the seventeenth century were too timid and too convinced of the 'stability of the status quo to build a utopia anywhere but in Australia; Mercier and Rétif de la Bretonne at the end of the eighteenth century are so bold and so aware of the inevitable transformation of their milieu that they construct their imaginary commonwealths upon the soil of France.

The basic philosophy which underlies the ideological content of French prerevolutionary utopianism, is also subject to obvious change and growth. J. B. Bury pointed out in his Idea of Progress (London, 1924), that although both the ancients and the moderns have sought after perfection, their perspective systems are sharply differentiated by the idea of progress which is lacking from classical, and is present in modern, thought. Plato did not conceive his Republic as the result of a process of increasing perfection. His ideal state was that perfection itself which comes from wise laws and the lack or prevention of corruption. The underlying philosophy of early modern utopianism is precisely the same. In France, during the renaissance of the utopian frame of mind, all the way down to the middle of the eighteenth century,

the existence of the Sevarambian, Avaïte, Naudelian, Greenland, Troglodite, Letalisponian, Mercurian, Dumoclan, and other austral utopias is ascribed to wise laws or the lack of corruption, and occasionally to the elimination of corruption and decay through a violent revolution. Indeed, the principle of attaining utopia by revolutionary means--a derivative phenomenon which becomes apparent with the growth of dissatisfaction in France beginning with the last years of Louis XIV--is the only contribution made by the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century French writers to utopian thought. Otherwise the classical spirit and the influence of Platonic philosophy reign supreme over the minds of the utopists. Then, at the middle of the century, the sudden appearance of a new idea--perfectibility--alters the entire course of French utopian thought. This idea of progress, a logical outgrowth of the late seventeenth-century quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, is written on the banners of all the utopists--except Rousseau and Grivel--who wrote after 1750. The new utopia of the late eighteenth century is to be attained through natural progress, which is inevitable and which is practically unlimited. This is the doctrine which is preached by Morelly, by Villeneuve, by Beaurieu, by the plagiarist Roumier, by Mercier, by Rétif de la Bretonne, and by the anonymous author of the République des philosophes. In his Découverte australe, Rétif de la Bretonne even goes one step further. Like Raynal, he believes in the improvement of the race and suggests a method of unnatural selection--cross-breeding of Europeans and gigantic Patagonians or various species of subhumans--in order to create an improved and superior race with greater capacities and potentialities for intellectual and social progress. But no matter whether future progress is to be effected through natural or unnatural means, the outlook of the progressivists who wrote their utopias on the eve of the Revolution, is violently optimistic. Mercier particularly, writing in 1770, senses the coming change, but his optimism is so dominant that he expects it to take place without any upheaval, as a result of royal magnanimity. Indeed, the doctrine of revolution, which first appears in French utopianism in Tyssot de Patot's romances toward the end of Louis XIV's reign, is retained by the utopists of 1770-90 but is transformed by them into a royal revolution or--as in Grivel's Isle incon nue--into a peerless code of wise laws bestowed upon a deserving people by royal grace. Mercier and Rétif de la Bretonne could

shine in the role of prophets only because their faith in the survival and regeneration of the monarchical institution was fortunately and opportunely linked with a much greater and more powerful creed: the idea of inevitable and unlimited progress.

The evolution of the literary medium in which French pre-revolutionary utopian thought is presented, is marked by a gradual decrease of realism. In its origins the French utopia of the old regime is only a branch of the European vogue of the ideal commonwealth which begins during the seventeenth century, owing to the stimulus supplied by the age of discoveries, and is therefore a phase in the "homeward movement" of the expansion of Europe. What distinguishes the early postdiscovery utopias from such delineations of imaginary realms in the classical tradition of Plato's Republic, More's Utopia, and Campanella's City of the Sun, is a note of realism. The classical tradition presents ideal commonwealths without any, or with little, regard for realistic detail, whereas in the modern, postdiscovery genre the actual utopian interest is enmeshed in a maze of realistic but spurious geographical, nautical, and exploratory data. This is certainly true of those utopias which were written in France during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Such products as Foigny's Aventures de Jacques Sadeur (1676), Vairasse's Histoire des Sévarambes (1677), and Gilbert's Calejava (1700) are highly imaginative romances in which the utopian interest is only an appendage of the imaginary voyage. This fusion of two literary genres--the imaginary voyage and the imaginary commonwealth--is the most characteristic feature of the early modern literary medium used by the French utopists at the end of the seventeenth century. However, immediately after the turn of the century the decay of the voyage-motif sets in. The first indication of this trend occurs in Lesconvel's Voyage du Prince Montberaud (1709), where the author dismisses in a somewhat contemptuous manner all matters pertaining to geography and exploratory adventure, and then proceeds to a minute description of the political, religious, and economic conditions in his imaginary realm. The decay of literary realism becomes complete in Rétif de la Bretonne's An 2000 (1790), which is an anaemic operetta, a musical-comedy version of the ideal France of the future, whose citizens pirouette in the unreal glow of footlights.

From the foregoing it becomes evident that on the basis of philosophical conviction, ideological content, and literary presen-

tation, prerevolutionary French utopianism is divisible into two distinct types, the first of which is dominant before, the second after, 1750. The first type is characterized by skepticism, a speculative spirit, geometrical perfectionism, and literary realism; the second type is distinguished by faith, naturalism, empiricism, the idea of progress, and the decay of literary realism. However, although the first type is dominant before, and the second after, 1750, no sharp chronological dichotomy exists; for the various aspects of the old type survive even after the middle of the century, while the new type begins to manifest itself early in the eighteenth century.

These, then, were the utopias of the "blind intellects" who had aroused Voltaire's ire. His wrath, however, must have been brewing for some time, for already ten years before the publication of the Précis du siècle de Louis XV he had given proof of his hostility toward the vogue of the utopias by incorporating the mock utopia of Eldorado in his Candide (1759). Eldorado is not only a burlesque of the literary genre but also a satire on utopianism. The golden land of the Andes is an open and shameless composite of earlier French utopias. It is reached by Candide and his faithful Cacambo through the caverns of a rapid subterranean river; that was also the method of communication between the outer world and Jaques Massé's unknown austral land.³ Upon arriving in Eldorado, the travelers are amazed at the natives' contemptuous treatment of gold and precious stones; in the Basiliade the virtuous subjects of King Zeinzemin treated the golden pebbles on their beaches with similar contempt.⁴ The customs and morals of the happy land are described for the visitors by a venerable old sage, the steadiest prop of all French utopian romances. Upon the high road to the capital, Candide and his servant find free hosteleries, maintained by the state at public expense; the traveling philosophe came upon the same institution among Villeneuve's virtuous Selenites.⁵ Throughout the country mathematical and physical instru-

³[Simon Tysot de Patot] Voyages et aventures de Jaques Massé (Bordeaux [Amsterdam?], 1710), pp. 326-39.

⁴[Morelly] Naufage des isles flottantes ou Basiliade du célèbre Pilpai, poème héroïque traduit de l'Indien par Mr. M. (Messina [Paris?]), II, 13.

⁵[Daniel deVilleneuve] Le voyageur philosophe dans un pays inconnu aux habitants de la terre . . . par Mr. de Listonai (Amsterdam, 1761), I, 272.

ments are much in evidence; so they were in the city of Selenopolis.⁶ The capital of Eldorado is an ultraperfect city--like the geometrically planned capital of every utopian land. The country itself is surrounded by a ring of steep mountains--a counterpart of those that Jaques Massé had to traverse.⁷ These mountains are crossed by Candide, Cacambo, and their gold-laden sheep in a gravitation-defying machine; in such a contraption did Villeneuve's traveling philosophe reach the moon.⁸ On the homeward voyage the unfortunate explorers lose all their evidence of the visit to Eldorado; a sarcastic thrust, no doubt, in the direction of the utopists whose heroes usually suffer the same fate and then ask the reader to accept their miraculous accounts on faith. Voltaire's implication, of course, is that no such place as Eldorado has ever existed. Eldorado--as Candide, its matrix--is a burlesque of rationalistic optimism, the voice of the patriarch of Ferney calling upon the utopists and their readers to cultivate their earthly gardens.

Even a superficial reading of the Eldorado episode reveals a great familiarity on the part of Voltaire with Tyssot de Patot's Voyages et aventures de Jaques Massé (1710). As a matter of fact, there is evidence that Voltaire was acquainted with this utopian romance, although he seems to have been ignorant of the author's identity. At the end of the thirteenth letter of the Lettres philosophiques (1734) he lists a number of noteworthy thinkers whom he considers as having been unjustly attacked by orthodox circles. In the first French edition of 1734 this list contains the names of Montaigne, Locke, Bayle, Spinoza, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Collins, and Toland; but in later editions many names are added and the paragraph in question is expanded to read:

Who are they that have carried the torch of discord in their country? Was it Pomponace, Montaigne, Le Vayer, Descartes, Gassendi, Bayle, Spinoza, Hobbes, Lord Shaftesbury, the Count of Boulainvilliers, the Consul Maillet, the author disguised under the name of Jacques Macé [the italics are mine], he of the Espion turc, he of the Lettres persanes, he

⁶Ibid., pp. 25-26.

⁷[Simon Tyssot de Patot] Voyages et aventures de Jaques Massé (Bordeaux [Amsterdam?], 1710), pp. 100-114.

⁸[Daniel deVilleneuve] Le voyageur philosophe dans un pays inconnu aux habitans de la terre par Mr. de Listonai (Amsterdam, 1761), I, 69-72.

of the Lettres juives, he of the Pensées philosophiques....⁹

Apparently Voltaire not only had read the Voyages et aventures de Jaques Massé, but he entertained a very high regard for the intellectual mettle of its author, whom he mentions in the same breath with Montaigne, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Montesquieu, and other giants. Indeed, Tyssot de Patot is the only utopist from whom Voltaire borrows in the Eldorado without mockery; apparently it was this expatriate French Huguenot whom the sage did not consider a "blind intellect" among all the French utopists known to him.

Incidentally, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and the star-crossed Gracchus Babeuf were also more or less assiduous readers of the obscure utopists. In the opening paragraph of Book IV, chapter vi, of the Esprit des lois (1748), speaking of the institutions of the Greeks, Montesquieu makes reference to Vairasse's Histoire des Sévarambes (1677) in the following sentence: "When you see in the life of Lycurgus the laws which he gave to the Lacedaemonians, you think you are reading the history of the Sevarambians." As for Rousseau, his correspondence yields ample evidence that the author of Emile and the Contrat social was acquainted with the books of Vairasse and Morelly. In a letter dated December 24, 1764, Rousseau, then in Motiers, requested the bookseller Duchesne of Paris to send him Tournefort's Institutiones rei herbariae, Vaillant's Botanicon parisiense, Les commentaires de César, and Barbou's Ovide. Then, as an afterthought, he added: "If you have on hand the Utopia of Thomas More and the Histoire des Sévarambes, I beg you to include them also."¹⁰ Earlier, during the winter of 1758, he seems to have been interested in Morelly's Iles flottantes ou la Basiliade (1753) and to have asked Mme D'Houdetot to get the book for him. In an undated letter, written about this time, Mme D'Houdetot grants his request in the following words: "Not only may you, my dear citizen, send someone to fetch the Iles flottantes, which I beg you to accept, but I shall always be delighted if you address yourself to me for everything which may be useful or agreeable to you."¹¹ In closing the letter, she speaks of Morelly's

⁹R. Naves (ed.), Voltaire, Lettres philosophiques (Paris, 1939), pp. 226-27.

¹⁰T. Dufour (ed.), Correspondance générale de J.-J. Rousseau (Paris, 1924-34), XII, 164.

¹¹M. G. Streckeisen-Moultou, J.-J. Rousseau, ses amis et ses ennemis (Paris, 1865), I, 410.

utopia once more: "Send someone to fetch the Iles flottantes, and accept it, since you seem to desire it."¹² There is no evidence to show that Rousseau actually received the two utopias mentioned above, or that he read them if they did arrive. The very fact, however, that he should ask for such an old book as Vairasse's Histoire des Sévarambes--which had been on the market for eighty-seven years when he wrote to Duchesne about it--seems to indicate that he was familiar with this utopian romance, though perhaps slightly, and wanted to refresh his memory.

In the case of Babeuf, the influence of the obscure Morelly produced tragic results. The identity of this utopist is still somewhat nebulous; indeed the two utopias ascribed to him--the Basiliade (1753) and the Code de la nature (1755)--were published anonymously. So much mystery naturally gave rise to speculation, with the result that these two works were ascribed to various well-known literary figures, notably to Diderot. The supplement to the 1756 edition of the France littéraire, for example, listed the Code among the works of Diderot, and in the 1769 edition the same statement was repeated. In fact, the five-volume edition of Diderot's works, published in Amsterdam in 1773, contained the Code in its second volume. Although Grimm, probably inspired by Diderot, had protested against the ascribing of the Code to his friend,¹³ the belief that this book was written by Diderot continued to persist. It was shared by Gracchus Babeuf, the leader of the Society of Equals, whose members made an abortive attempt in 1796 to replace the "bourgeois republic" of the Directory with a "democratic republic." The political, social, and economic ideas professed by Babeuf and his followers, were those of the Code; in fact, the aim of the conspiracy of 1796 was to promulgate a new constitution for France, based upon Morelly's Code de la nature. This much was readily admitted by Babeuf during his trial before the Cour de Vendôme. In his speech to the jurors Gracchus quoted freely from the Code (always under the misapprehension that it was the work of Diderot). He cited verbatim the three "fundamental and sacred laws" of Morelly, namely, that "nothing in the society shall belong individually and exclusively to any person, except the thing of

¹²Ibid., p. 411.

¹³M. Tourneux (ed.), Correspondance litteraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister, etc. (Paris, 1877-82), III, 244.

which he makes actual use,"¹⁴ that "each citizen shall be a 'public man,' sustained, supported, and employed at public expense,"¹⁵ and that "each citizen shall contribute his part to the public authority according to his ability, talent, and age" ¹⁶ This Babeuf called "the doctrine of Diderot."¹⁷ Then, with a sarcastic thrust in the direction of the public prosecutors, whose list of accusations he was trying to refute, he exclaimed: "Do we not find even in the exposé of the accusateurs nationaux such statements as are less applicable to the . . . alleged conspirators than to the author of the Code de la nature? . . . In the eyes of the same accusateurs Diderot [sic!] should appear as the supreme chief of all the conspirators."¹⁸ Diderot, of course, was dead in 1796 and could not protest. If the mysterious Morelly was still alive in 1796--forty-one years after the publication of the Code--it would be too much to expect of him to step before the court trying Babeuf and his friends, acknowledge the authorship of the Code, and claim the dubious honor of being the "supreme chief" of the conspirators. But whether the author of the Code was a man named Morelly or Diderot, matters little. What is significant is that Babeuf quoted verbatim from the Code de la nature and admitted that his political, social, and economic ideas were derived from that book. This, of course, implies no causal relationship as far as political history is concerned. Babeuf's ideas probably would have been very much the same even if he had never read the Code, though he may have formulated them differently. Nevertheless, the undeniable fact remains that Babeuf accepted and paid with his life for the utopian ideas of an obscure writer named Morelly, who was very likely one of Voltaire's "blind intellectuals."

Students of the prerevolutionary period in French history from Taine to Daniel Mornet are in agreement that the great upheaval in French state and society at the end of the eighteenth

¹⁴"Défense générale de Babeuf devant la Haute-Cour de Vendôme (an V)" in V. Advielle, Histoire de Gracchus Babeuf et du Babouvisme (Paris, 1884), II, 58; cf. [Morelly] Code de la nature ou le véritable esprit de ses lois ("Collection des économistes et des réformateurs sociaux de la France" [Paris, 1910]), p. 85.

¹⁵Advielle, II, 58; cf. [Morelly], Code de la nature, p. 85.

¹⁶Advielle, II, 58; cf. [Morelly], Code de la nature, p. 85.

¹⁷Advielle, II, 59. ¹⁸Ibid.

century was preceded by a revolution in the minds of men. Taine and his antirevolutionary school maintained that the fall of the old regime was brought about by the wilful machinations of utopistic philosophes; Mornet and other modern historians have attempted to demonstrate that the intellectual unrest during the eighteenth century was only a symptom of the approaching political and social revolution. It is one of the paradoxes of intellectual history that Voltaire, who bears some responsibility for the growth of this intellectual unrest, was unable to fathom the lower depths of the dark waters which were swirling about him in 1769 and of which the forward surge became irresistible in 1789.

